



James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital – Tampa, Florida

Director's e-News

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'Pinch yourself'



graphic courtesy of HDR

The new James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital parking garage will be constructed behind the Emerald Parking Lot on Richard A. Silver Way. The garage will have six floors and 1,500 parking spaces.

Long-awaited parking garage in the works

Kamryn Jaroszewski

The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital is widely celebrated for its advances in medicine, technology, research and Polytrauma.

In 18 months, a parking garage will be added to that list.

The garage, perhaps the most

anticipated of the numerous construction projects, will be constructed southeast of the main hospital campus and will add 1,500 parking spaces for patients and employees.

JAHVH celebrated the news during a groundbreaking ceremony June 25.

Chief of Facility Management Ron

Stipp said the project has been planned for more than 10 years. The actual design began in fall 2008, and funding was approved earlier this year.

Sandra K. Janzen, Haley's nurse executive, asked the audience who

See Garage, page 6

Learning not to 'dis' abilities of veterans

Kamryn Jaroszewski

I'm guilty – but of what, I'm not sure. Noticing? Looking? Wondering? When I joined the VA team a year ago, I admit I felt slightly awkward.



I knew I would be working in a veterans' hospital, and that in this hospital signs of war and illness would be everywhere.

"No problem," I thought. I'd seen injured people before. After all, I've spent the last nine years of my life either being in the Army or being married to it. So I was surprised when I couldn't even answer a simple question.

"Hi, how are you?" he asked. I froze – just like that. I think I managed to smile, but I'm not sure.

This man, a Vietnam veteran, was wearing a gray shirt that matched his wiry beard. He had an American flag bandana on his head.

He had no legs.

I felt bad, even as I was doing it, because all I was looking at was what wasn't there.

I'm not sure why I was so taken aback. I've met wounded soldiers before, and I've certainly seen people



graphic by Kamryn Jaroszewski

in wheelchairs before. But for that instant, I felt like my 3-year-old daughter.

"Mommy, where is that man's legs?"

This culture-shock-of-sorts went on throughout the summer.

What do you say to a person who can't walk? Do you offer to push their chair? Do you bend down when speaking to them?

I felt like I was the only one who didn't know the protocol.

But then, as I found my niche in the hospital, I became more comfortable. I began hearing the stories of these veterans, and I met their families.

I finally saw the light.

These were not handicapped veterans. They were veterans who happened to be handicapped.

What an amazing classroom this hospital is.

In the year since I started working

here, I have learned to see these people for who they are, not for what injury they have.

I've stopped looking at their wounds and scars and started looking at their faces, because that's where the true stories are.

Now I see them, not the wheelchair they ride in or the cane they lean on. I see their progress – their amazing progress – instead of their setbacks.

I see where they will be, not where

they have been.

These veterans, whether they have spoken to me or not, have taught me that handicaps are in the eyes of the beholder.

They have taught me that it's not about *disability*, but *their* ability – to heal, to conquer, to live.

What do you say to a person who can't walk? To the gentleman in the gray shirt with the wiry beard, I hope to see you again. Because then I will say, "I'm just fine, sir. How are you?"

"They have taught me that it's not about *disability*, but *their* ability – to heal, to conquer, to live."

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Of ers



James A. Haley Veterans'
Hospital & Clinics

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Ed Caum

Photographer: Ebby Talebi

What would you like to see in the Director's e-News?
E-mail kamryn.jaroszewski@va.gov and tell me!

Junior intern's essay lands him scholarship

Philip Rajeev

For the past two summers, I have had the prestigious opportunity to volunteer at the James A. Haley Hospital in Tampa, Florida.

Upon my first summer volunteering at the VA, I was distraught because I

wanted to return to volunteering at the more familiar Tampa General Hospital.

Due to certain circumstances, I came to the James A. Haley Hospital to do my volunteering and I can say now that this opportunity has been tremendous for me in so many different ways.

Volunteering at VA medical center has been great for me personally but ultimately it has been so meaningful to me because I've been able to give back to the courageous Veterans of our nation, who have made great sacrifices in defense of the great American Dream.

I've been able to dream because of these veterans and my dream has always been to go into the field of medicine just because it had such great esteem from the Indian community which I come from.

This dream is my motivation to volunteer at hospitals because I want to gain as much experience as I can in the field of medicine.

I had that opportunity to some extent when volunteering at Tampa General Hospital where I was able to assist diabetic nurse practitioners and personal trainers at employee health fitness.



Nevertheless volunteering at the VA hospital was beyond the imagined experience I had ever hoped for. While volunteering at VA hospital I was able to serve the Veterans of the Long Term Care Unit and the Spinal Cord Unit.

Volunteering in these units really made me realize that medicine is very much about serving others and specifically at the VA about serving those whom have sacrificed for our country.

I became really close to one veteran in the long-term care unit because I was always his partner in various recreation activities. He was going through so many medical tribulations of such which I could never imagine myself being able to persist through.

During my time in long-term care unit he had been forced to amputate his left leg because of life threatening infections. After his amputation, we had a genuine conversation about life in the military.

In that conversation he broke down with tears and moment of initial tears, I said to myself "here is a great man whose life has and is completely altered because he sacrificed his natural life for the defense of a nation that stands for freedom".

After meeting this veteran I took each day of volunteering with great respect and admiration. I was only able to volunteer three weeks my first summer because of a scheduled trip to India.

However I would return to the VA hospital in Tampa this summer with an established program in the Junior Internship Program of Volunteers.

I had the opportunity to view procedures in the Cardiac Cath Lab and the OR but I also got to be around admirable physicians and nurses of the Spinal Cord Unit. I gained an incredible amount of knowledge and interest in the medical field but more than anything I got to meet Veterans who endured in some way an aspect of suffering.

I realized through just general conversations with Veterans of the Spinal Cord Unit this summer that these prestige Veterans were normal people who had made a great commitment.

Volunteering in this Junior Internship made me respect their great commitment for our country. Although I learned an incredible amount about medicine through my two summers of volunteering at the VA, my knowledge gained did not make my number one highlight as a volunteer or as junior intern. Volunteering has been so great because I was able to meet face to face, Veterans who sacrifice their lives for me and the rest of the American nation.

I can have the dream of being a doctor or having a career in the field of medicine because a Veteran sacrificed his or her life for our nation.

(Editor's note: The Junior Intern Program started in the early 2000s as a way for high-achieving high school students to gain valuable experience in medical specialties.

Junior intern Philip Rajeev won the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship first-place \$5,000 prize with this essay about volunteering at JAHVH. In 10 years, he sees himself working as a chiropractor or physical therapist.)

Marine overcomes odds after near-fatal ambush

Kamryn Jaroszewski

Lt. Col. Benjamin "Ty" Edwards needed to wake up. He had Marines to lead.

That message, given by Gen. James Amos, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, appeared to fall on deaf ears. Edwards lay in a bed at National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., bandaged, bloated and in a coma.

The Marine who had survived five other deployments now clung to life. He had no prognosis.

Hometown sweethearts

Edwards was a second lieutenant home on leave at Christmas when he met his future wife, Anna. Their families had known each other for years, and the two had been set up by mutual friends.

His first impression of Anna? "She was beautiful."

The two officially began dating, albeit long distance, two years later. She was in college studying occupational therapy and he was a rifle platoon commander in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

He later transferred to Parris Island, S.C., and the two married Nov. 1, 1997. They have two children, Mason, 8, and Alaina, 6.

Wounded in action

In March 2008, Edwards deployed from Okinawa, Japan, to Afghanistan as a mentor, adviser and trainer to the Afghan National Army. On Sunday, Oct. 18, 2008, he was part of a coalition convoy en route to deliver supplies to another base.

"The (U.S.) Army was up front and the Afghan National Army in back," Edwards recalled. "We came under ambush. I jumped out to go help the Afghans. My gunner, (Marine) 1st Lt. (Sean) McQuiston was obviously working the gun and the driver,



photos by Kamryn Jaroszewski/PAO

Gen. James Amos, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, congratulates Lt. Col. Benjamin "Ty" Edwards after pinning on his Bronze Star Medal June 22 in the Spinal Cord Injury Center dining room. The first time Amos visited Edwards only eight months ago, he was in a coma in Bethesda, Md.

(Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Stephen) "Doc" Albright was driving.

"I got out and four or five shots (rang out)," he said.

Edwards was initially knocked out, but briefly regained consciousness and remembers lying on his stomach and seeing blood running down the road. He thought, "this is it."

"If it weren't for Hakimi, my interpreter, and Doc Albright and Lt. McQuiston, who came out under fire, I might not be here today," Edwards said.

The shot, likely an armor-piercing round, hit him square in the forehead. It went through his helmet, into the skull and into the back of his helmet, where it lodged.

Edwards was initially treated in the field before spending three days in Bagram. He received two surgeries

there before being transferred to Landstuhl, Germany.

The call

Anna was at home in Okinawa with their children.

"It was about 6 o'clock in the morning and my cell phone rang. It was downstairs so I couldn't get to it," she said. "It rang again. My son went and got it and brought it to me."

"In the middle of the night they got the news that he was shot, but they didn't call me until the morning; they didn't want to call in the middle of the night. It was Gen. (Robert) Neller who called and told me Ty had been hit in the head," Anna said.

Mason knew because he was still standing beside his mother.

See *Marine*, page 5

Marine

from page 4

Together, they told Alaina when she woke up.

"We just hugged each other and cried," she said. "We didn't know if it was a scratch or if he was dead. We just waited for Gen. Neller to get (to our house)."

A friend came over to watch over the children while Anna spoke with the Marines. She was able to call the doctor in Bagram who performed a surgery on Edwards. As the two were talking, Anna could hear a commotion in the background.

"(The doctor) said, 'there is some guy here who wants to talk to you, but you don't have time for that.' I could hear him calling out his name – it was Shane Tomko. He was a friend of Ty's, and just by coincidence was in the hospital there and saw them wheel Ty by."

Shane stayed at Ty's bedside the whole time, Anna said. He relayed messages from Anna to her husband, and she said just knowing Edwards had a friend by his side gave her comfort.

When he was stable enough to be



The bullet that pierced Lt. Col. Ty Edwards' skull entered in the center of his forehead and lodged in the back of his helmet. Despite his catastrophic injury, Edwards is only challenged by a change in his motor ability.

transferred, Edwards went to Landstuhl, Germany; it was there Anna saw him for the first time.

"Friends came to keep the kids and I left 24 hours later with a chaplain," she said. "In the meantime, my mother and stepfather were making their arrangements to get to Okinawa to get the kids and pack

them up to bring them back to the states."

When Anna landed, she was surprised by two friends who were in Germany. They went with her to the hospital.

"It was awful and scary," Anna said of her first visit. They were there less than 24 hours before being sent on to National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, where he stayed for six weeks.

Semper Fi

Anna said not having a prognosis was good in some ways and hard in others.

"Nobody will tell you anything. Nobody will say. It was very much unknown," she said. "The first time I knew that Ty was really in there and hearing everything and was aware was in the ICU. The therapist was talking to him and trying to get him to respond."

"She said, 'can you kiss your wife?' Of course, he couldn't move or anything yet, but he just slightly



Lt. Col. Ty Edwards smiles as Gen. James Amos recounts his first few visits with the wounded Marine at National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Amos said he frequently recommends James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital because of the miracles that occur here.

See *Marine*, page 9

Garage

from page 1

had been at the hospital for 20 years or more.

"I want every one of you to pinch yourself," she said. "When I came here in August 1986, they were talking about a parking garage. I said I'd believe it when I see it."

Janzen described the dirt path before Richard A. Silver Way and the handfuls of parking spaces between clumps of trees.

"Things have really changed. I think what it says about this organization, is the fact that you really can have very bold visions," she said.

Stephen M. Lucas, hospital director, said it takes a village to build a parking garage.

In Haley's case, that village includes congressional representatives, veterans' organizations, staff, patients and visitors.

"VA health care is the best care

anywhere; high quality. But if you can't get to it, where's the quality?" he asked. "You see what the patients and staff have to go through just to get here."

In an effort to improve access to care, clinics that could serve independently were moved off-site.

"(We wanted to) make it easier for patients to visit the Tampa (VA)," Lucas said. "It's a work in progress, and will take a few years to get done. In the meantime, what you're going to see is a lot of construction, leading literally toward a new face for the Haley VA."

"The Tampa economy has taken a hit along with the rest of the economy," he said. "Projects like this really do stimulate the construction economy in the area and that's good for our wider community. This is a remarkable accomplishment that we can all be proud of."

Wendy Moran, the vice president representing HDR, the architectural firm involved with the Tampa VA's facelift, said her company is thrilled to be designing projects for such a

worthy cause.

"We're privileged to be part of this project. This is the first phase of three – the parking garage is initiating the overall Polytrauma project," she said.

"(The second is) the Polytrauma addition with a therapy pool and then the (main hospital) bed tower renovation."

The designers for the garage took into consideration its location in the back of the campus – vertical elements extending above the garage will serve as a beacon so patients and visitors can find it.

Moran said the horizontal elements will help shade the entries, and would be carried through the remaining construction projects.

The Polytrauma addition will consist of two floors for patient care and one electrical floor over the existing Michael Bilirakis Spinal Cord Injury Center.

The therapy pool will be built in the area left of the SCI circle. That phase of the construction is scheduled to be completed mid-2012.



photo by Ebby Talebi/Medical Media

Members of James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital's leadership team and HDR Architecture company ceremoniously shovel dirt June 25 at the site of the new parking garage. The project is expected to be completed in December 2010 and will add 1,500 spaces to the main campus.

'Da Bus' coming to a community near you

Kamryn Jaroszewski

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital is the proud owner of a 33,000-pound flagship.

The Mobile Outreach Clinic was unveiled to those attending the June 25 ceremony celebrating the bus and the groundbreaking for Haley's parking garage.

Chief of Staff Dr. Edward Cutolo Jr. said the new bus is a state-of-the-art vehicle.

This Mobile Outreach Clinic has three exam rooms, a diesel generator, four air conditioners, a bathroom, two wheelchair lifts and so many other "extras."

Its target audience is veterans in Hillsborough, Hernando, Polk and Pasco counties.

Mobile Outreach Clinic services will include enrollment; health screenings; preventative health shots, including flu, pneumonia and shingles shots; blood pressure and cholesterol checks; a mobile coumadin clinic designed to help prevent heart attacks, strokes and blood clots; homeless and mental health outreach; yearly physicals for patients with spinal cord injuries and disaster management.

"If there is a hurricane or any other national disaster, we can pull this Mobile Outreach Clinic right up to an



graphic courtesy of Matthews Specialty Vehicles

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital's new Mobile Outreach Clinic was an eight-month project and will make its formal public debut at Congressman Gus Bilirakis' Third Annual Military Day and Veterans Resource Fair Aug. 29 from 1 to 4 p.m. at East Lake High School in Tarpon Springs. The bus will, among other services, be used to enroll new Category 8 veterans for VA care.

area, turn the generators on, put the satellite dish up and log on to our computerized electronic records immediately and start business the minute we pull up," Cutolo said.

The bus will also be used to enroll veterans in the newly expanded Category 8 tier.

"We anticipate enrolling about 4,500 new veterans this year and the bus will play a significant part of that," Cutolo said.

Bringing services to veterans in their community is an extension of programs already in place, such as

the Home-Based Primary Care program. Cutolo said improving access to care is secondary only to providing high-quality care to our veterans.

"We continue to expand services and decompress the main campus to better serve our deserving veterans," he said.

"It's a good thing when we can save our patients time and money. The Mobile Outreach Clinic truly is a win-win for James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and our community."

New public affairs specialist joins James A. Haley team

Ed Caum joins the Director's Office Staff as a public affairs specialist bringing with him experience from the governmental and non-profit sectors.



Caum is retired from Army public

affairs, served six years as an executive director for United Way and was most recently working at an alternative school in Indiana, working with at-risk youth.

He holds a Bachelor in Communication and taught photojournalism for the Department of Defense while on active duty.

His photography business, dotCaum Photography, which he ran on the side, allowed him to continue

to pursue his passion.

His wife, Susannah, will be joining him upon her retirement from the state of Indiana where she is a workforce development specialist. They have six children, two of which are still in high school, two on active duty, one a disabled veteran who is married to a service member and one who works for CSX Railways.

Contact Ed at (813) 972-7569 or edward.caum@va.gov.

Right:
Employees
and
veterans
were able to
learn about
China's
culture
during the
festivities.

Far right:
South
Korean
dancer
Chaemin
Juranek,
finishes the
Drummer
Dance.



Above and
right:
Members of
the Asian-
Pacific
Special
Emphasis
Program
displayed
cultural
artwork and
figurines
from several
Asian
countries
including
Laos,
Philippines,
Korea, China
and India.



photos by Kamryn Jaroszewski/Public Affairs

A celebration of nations

Professional Chinese dancer Wei Xu performs the Peacock Dance during the Asian-Pacific Heritage Month celebration June 3 in the hospital's Auditorium.

Marine

from page 5

puckered his lips and a tear rolled down his cheek,” Anna said.

Edwards slowly improved – he began tracking with his eyes, then turning his head and finally saying his first words.

“I was standing in his face saying, ‘Anna, Anna.’ (Instead) his first words were, ‘Semper Fi,’” she said, laughing. “He said it repeatedly for days.”

As Edwards continued to progress at NNMC, the Marines in Okinawa saw to their household goods, leases, vehicles and even returned library books.

“It was amazing how they handled everything,” Anna said. “Lt. Col. Don Carrier made it his mission to (handle) everything so professionally. I didn’t have any of that stress on me.”

Their children stopped through Bethesda so Anna could see them; she wanted to wait for them to see their dad. From there, Anna’s parents took the children home to Panama City, Fla., and enrolled them in school. Edwards was admitted to James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital just before

Thanksgiving, and Mason and Alaina moved down during the Christmas break.

In eight months, the progress he has made is incredible. If Edwards owes his life to 1st Lt.

McQuiston, Doc Albright and Hakimi, then he

owes his recovery to his own will and determination, and that of his JAHVH team.

“His recovery is pretty dramatic,” said Dr. Steven Scott, Tampa’s top Polytrauma doctor. “When he got



Alaina Edwards, 6, took a moment to hug her dad, Lt. Col. Ty Edwards, after his Bronze Star presentation June 22 at James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital.

here, he couldn’t speak or move, and now he’s learning to walk. He has improved a great deal. He’s having conversations and getting out into the community. He’s going home on weekend passes. He controls his own schedule.”

The staff, Anna said, has made all the difference.

“They have surpassed our hopes and expectations. The staff has been wonderfully caring and dedicated to a much greater degree than I could have ever even hoped for.”

— Anna Edwards

“They have surpassed our hopes and expectations. The staff has been wonderfully caring and dedicated to a much greater degree than I could have ever even hoped for.”

And more than anything, she said, their family is

humbled by the outpouring of support from strangers around the world.

“When I saw Ty for the first time in Germany, he had a red, white and blue quilt on him,” she said. “It

touched me so much to know that before he was even on American soil, the American people were thinking of him and taking care of him. It was such a reassurance to me.”

Honoring a hero

Edwards received his Bronze Star Medal June 22 in a small hospital dining room in front of friends and family.

Before the ceremony was even half-over, an adjoining dining room had to be opened – his extended family, the hospital staff and patients, also came to congratulate him.

Gen. Amos came down for the occasion and recounted to the audience his first few visits with Edwards in Bethesda, and the message he whispered in his ear. To see him in uniform in a standing wheelchair is something Amos said is truly miraculous.

“When I talk to people up there (at NNMC), I tell them, ‘go to Tampa. They do miracles in Tampa,’” he said.

Indeed, they do. Edwards is proof.

It's official — Haley's wound-care nurses are the best

PAO staff report

The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital has long recognized that highly credentialed nurses are a critical link in the care of patients. The facility is going above and beyond to ensure top-notch care is available to our veterans by encouraging its nurses to achieve the "gold standard" national certification of the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board, also called WOCNCB.

In the past, few nurses with these credentials were readily available, so the nursing staff challenged themselves to pursue this top-level certification with the support of the administration. Less than two years from implementation, the hospital applied for and won the WOCNCB Employer Recognition Award.

The WOCNCB developed a handbook detailing steps needed and Haley nurses jumped in and began meeting the goals of certification, literally growing gold credentialed nurses from those employed here. A plan was developed to increase the existing resources of wound-care specialists from 2.4 positions (in 2007) to a proactive 8.4 positions.

The challenge seemed simple, but finding qualified and experienced personnel to augment the already thinly stretched WOCN staff on shifts was a barrier, according to Candice Watkins, a registered nurse and certified WOCN specialist at JAHVH. A call was put out and was approved to staff five new positions. Four in-house nurses were oriented to the credentialing handbook, and while they were on their regular jobs, were provided educational support so they could meet the standards of WOCNCB.

The next step was encouraging and integrating them into the hospital, Spinal Cord Injury Center and Haley's Cove Community Living Center.



photo by Ebby Talebi/Medical Media

Winners of the National Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society Certification Board Employer Recognition Award are (left to right): Anatalia Resulta, Christine Bennett, Heidi Lacko, Paula Boyle, Susan Thomason, Candice Watkins, Anne Dammers and Jane Nichols.

Besides regular shift and staff work, these nurses completed all the web-based WOC Nursing Courses in three tracks: Certified Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing.

Their certification followed completion of documentation of clinical hours, submission of three patient case studies and passing final examinations in all three tracks. All four passed and are now serving alongside other WOCNs.

Experience has now shown these wound-care specialists are well-integrated into the wards and teams in various units and have become valued subject matter experts for the staff to consult with to get suggestions, assistance with diagnosis, educational programs and data analysis.

"One of the real benefits to this endeavor is the rich interdisciplinary collaboration between front-line staff and advance practical nurses, physicians, therapists, dietitians,

social worker and psychologists, among others," Watkins said.

"While other larger hospitals have one or two CWOCNs and others that practice in multiple areas, this hospital has a firm belief that, not only are the numbers of WOC nurses needed, but the certification process gives them the quality that instills confidence for the remainder of the patient care team and most importantly the patient."

The CWOCNs were also recognized with the national Innovation Award. After rising above other applicants from across the country, Haley's CWOCNs received \$10,000 and shared the incentive pay between eight members of the team, including two new CWOCNs. Haley will continue to be supportive both financially and with allowing time off to attend conferences and educational programs so these "gold standard" employees can continue to shine.



photo by George Young/HAS

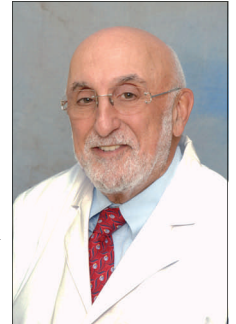
Exceptional employees

Shella Miller (far left), chief of Health Administration Service, stands with (left to right) Marcia McMann, Christopher Cooper, Sherri Alip and Nadine Love at the second annual HAS Recognition Ceremony June 5 in the hospital's Auditorium. McMann and Cooper, both with the Brooksville Community-Based Outpatient Clinic, received the Red Carpet Service Award for the most number of customer service gold stars received. Alip, from the Zephyrhills CBOC, was selected as a most valuable player and winner of the Top CBOC All Around Performer award.

Acting SCI chief receives award for outstanding service

PAO staff report

Dr. Robert D. Shapiro, D.D.S., was recently recognized with a special contribution award for his service as the Acting Chief of the Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center.



Shapiro, the associate chief of staff of Performance Improvement and acting chief of Dental Service, was instrumental in the reorganization of the 100-bed unit.

During his leadership, he directed team building sessions with the multidisciplinary staff of SCI which improved the communication on the unit.

He educated the physicians, advanced registered nurse practitioners, nurses, rehabilitation staff and volunteers to help them understand the complex veterans they serve.

Shapiro instructed the staff how to gather important data to improve their delivery of health care more efficiently. He oversaw the coordination of the opening of the SCI Four Seasons Community Living Center, improved the process in examining the efficiency of the urodynamics clinics in SCI and developed a strategic plan for SCI.

The organizational stewardship and personal mastery skills Shapiro possesses has helped the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Clinics strive for organizational performance excellence in serving our veterans, especially his work on the Spinal Cord Injury Unit.

Fast cash

Bay Gulf Credit Union has installed a new ATM in the Spinal Cord Injury Center lobby. The other ATM, located near the Canteen on the second floor, is still in use. Both machines are available for patients, visitors and employees.



photo by Kamryn Jaroszewski/PAO

Haley's Chaplain Service worthy of praise

PAO staff report

The Chaplain Service at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital has achieved a new level of professionalism only reached by two other hospitals in the nation.

After a site visit July 8 and 9, Chaplain Jim Taylor and his staff received the prestigious designation of being accredited by the Council on Ministry in Specialized Settings Commission for Accreditation of Pastoral Services (COMISS CCAPS).

To obtain this accreditation, which is a five-year process, each chaplain had to become board certified, and the Chaplain Service had to show how they met all CCAPS standards for the last five years and complete a successful site review.

CCAPS provides accreditation for health care organizations involved in the delivery of pastoral care in specialized settings.

The commission is concerned with the development and application of professional standards for pastoral care departments. CCAPS will attest to the ability of a facility and its Pastoral Care Services to meet the Standards for Accreditation of Pastoral Care Services developed by



photo by Ebby Talebi/Medical Media

The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital's Chaplain Service is now one of three in the nation to be accredited. Pictured left to right are Chaplain Jim Taylor, Chaplain Mike Carr, Chaplain Larry Connelly, Stephen Lucas and Chaplain Mike Pollitt during the site visit out brief July 9.

the COMISS Network.

Although accreditation of a health care organization's pastoral services by CCAPS is a voluntary procedure, accreditation of a health care facility's pastoral services demonstrates a commitment to providing quality, holistic, cost-effective care.

Accreditation sends an important message to consumers about their health and the importance of choosing a health care facility that emphasizes delivering good care.

During the out brief, the site visit review team expressed how impressed they were with Chaplain Service and senior leadership. Some of their strength comments included:

- Full support of the director and leadership.
- Aligned under the Chief of Staff's office, which is a rare but excellent indicator of how Chaplain Service is well-integrated with interdisciplinary patient care.
- "Without the Chaplain Service, we wouldn't be functioning at the level we are" was one comment made by one of the service chiefs who was interviewed by the site review team.
- The surveyors were in awe of how well they were treated by every employee they encountered from housekeeping, providers and leadership.

New FDVA supervisor poised to help veterans

PAO staff report

David Austin is the new veteran's claims examiner supervisor for the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs. His office is located in Bldg. 19.

Austin, an Army veteran, has more than 20 years experience as an advocate for veterans and their family members.

He has worked at the county, state and federal levels and is accredited by 11 National Veteran's

Organizations.

His office provides benefits assistance at no cost to all veterans and family members. Any veteran seeking assistance in obtaining benefits administered by the federal Department of Veteran Affairs or Florida Department of Veterans Affairs can contact his office at (813) 972-2000, ext. 6589.

